

Message Text

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SUBJECT: REACTION TO CABINET CHANGES

REF: SEOUL 9794 (DTG 190945Z DEC 75)

SUMMARY: CONSENSUS HAS EMERGED IN PAST FEW DAYS AMONG LOCAL POLITICAL OBSERVERS THAT DECEMBER 19 CABINET CHANGES (REFTEL) ILLUSTRATE PRESIDENT PARK'S PERCEPTION THAT "YUSHIN" SYSTEM IS NOW ESTABLISHED AND SECURE; EXPECTATION IS THAT DURING LAST HALF OF SIX-YEAR YUSHIN TERM PRESIDENT WILL MOVE TO "DE-POLITICIZE" AND TECHNICALLY SHARPEN DOMESTIC ADMINISTRATION. REPLACEMENT OF MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURE KIM CHONG-PIL BY FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPECIALIST CHOE KYU-HA IS GENERALLY SEEN AS SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION IN DOMESTIC CHAIN OF CONTROL, WITH GREATER CONSOLIDATION OF CONTROL NOW IN PRESIDENT'S HANDS. PRESS AND LOCAL CONTACTS AGREE THAT CHOE KYU-HA'S AND PAK TONG CHIN'S APPOINTMENTS INDICATE ROKG WILL DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION AND RESOURCES TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS. FURTHER CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT POLITICAL PARTY HEIRARCHIES EXPECTED WHICH MAY INVOLVE KIM CHONG-PIL AND SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSENSUS AMONG EMBASSY CONTACTS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED DECEMBER 19 CABINET CHANGES IS THAT MOVE MARKS
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END OF INTRODUCTORY PERIOD FOR YUSHIN CONSTITUTION AND CONSOLI-

DATION OF POWER IN PRESIDENT PARK CHUNG-HEE'S HANDS. RESIGNATIONS OF KIM CHONG-PIL AND HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES, THE HOME MINISTER PAK KYONG-WON AND FIRST MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO YI PYONG-HUI, TOGETHER WITH RETENTION AND NEW APPOINTMENT OF TECHNICALLY CAPABLE MEN WITH PROVEN RECORDS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND LOYALTY TO PARK, BRINGS IN "ADMINISTRATORS" IN PLACE OF THE ONE MAN WHO WAS LEFT IN TOP HEIRARCHY OF GOVERNMENT WITH OWN POWERFUL POLITICAL BASE. KIM PLAYED KEY INTERMEDIARY ROLE IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL SECURITY APPARATUS, COORDINATING AND TO SOME EXTENT DIRECTING ACTIVITIES OF KCIA, HOME AND JUSTICE MINISTRIES.

2. ON OTHER HAND, KCIA DIRECTOR SIN CHIK-SU, HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATE, THE NEW HOME MINISTER, KIM CHI-YOL, THE MINISTERS OF JUSTICE (ALSO CLOSE TO SIN) EDUCATION, AND CULTURE AND INFORMATION AS WELL AS NEW PROSECUTOR GENERAL ALL HAVE ACADEMIC, JOURNALISTIC, OR LEGAL/BUREAUCRATIC BACKGROUNDS. THERE IS NOT A SOLDIER OR POLITICIAN IN THE GROWD. LIKE NAM TOK-U AND THE ECONOMIC MINISTERS OF THE PAST THESE MEN WHO WILL ADMINISTER THE KEY ORGANIZATIONS ON THE POLITICAL SIDE ARE ESSENTIALLY SKILLED TECHNOCRATS WHO BUILT SUCCESSFUL RECORDS IN HELPING PARK MOVE THE CONTROLLING INSTRUMENTS OF THE YUSHIN SYSTEM INTO PLACE. WE EXPECT THAT THESE TECHNOCRATS WILL BE MORE SUBTLE THAN THEIR PREDECESSORS IN CONTROLLING DOMESTIC UNREST. KCIA DIRECTOR SIN, KIM SONG-CHIN AT MCUI AND YU KI-CHUN AT EDUCATION WILL ALSO PROBABLY WORK SKILLFULLY THROUGH MEDIA AND THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM TO CAST PRESENT GOVERNMENT SYSTEM IN BETTER LIGHT AND TO BUILD UP IDEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR PARK REGIME. SUMMING UP CHANGES IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR OUTGOING FOREIGN MINISTER KIM TONG-CHO DESCRIBED PRESENT CABINET AS "CARETAKER" GOVERNMENT UNTIL POLITICS AGAIN APPROPRIATE AT TIME OF NEXT ELECTION THREE YEARS HENCE.

3. WHILE ALL THESE MEN ARE LOYAL AND NON POLITICAL BY COMPARISON TO FORMER PRIMIN, WHO EMERGES ABOVE OTHERS ALONG WITH THE HIGHLY REGARDED DPM NAM TOK-UN SECRETARY GENERAL KIM CHOM YOM, AND KEY GENERALS ON SECURITY SIDE IS SIN CHIK-SU. SIN ACCORDING SEVERAL SOURCES HAS HAD INCREASINGLY STRONG VOICE WITH PRESIDENT AND REPORTEDLY INFLUENCED CABINET SHAKE-UP. SIN'S CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH HOME AND JUSTICE MINISTERS IS CONFIDENTIAL

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SEEN BY SOME SOURCES AS PROOF OF SIN'S STANDING. ALTHOUGH SIN HAS HIMSELF BEEN RUMORED AS POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT FOR BLUE HOUSE SECRETARY GENERAL KIM CHOM-YOM, NDP ASSEMBLYMAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE EXPECTS SIN TO REMAIN AT CIA AT LEAST UNTIL OTHER MAJOR CHANGES COMPLETED IN MARCH TO ADD STABILITY DURING PERIOD OF CHANGE.

4. OTHER KEY ASPECT OF CHANGES LIES ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS SIDE.

WITH CHOE KYU-HA AS PRIME MINISTER BACKED UP BY PAK TONG-CHIN AT MOFA, FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES BELIEVE ROKG WILL HAVE GREATER EXPERTISE IN AND WILL DEVOTE MORE RESOURCES TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WE EXPECT NEW TEAM TO WORK FOR BETTER RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND JAPAN AND FOR A MORE EFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF DIPLOMATIC RESOURCES IN "THIRD WORLD". REFLECTING THIS THERE ARE CONSTANT RUMORS TO EFFECT THAT HIGHLY CAPABLE BLUE HOUSE SECRETARY GENERAL KIM CHONG-YOM OR FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND CURRENT YUCHONGHOE CHAIRMAN PAK TU-CHIN MAY BE POSTED AS AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN. KIM TONG-CHO TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT BOTH CHOE AND PAK HAVE SKEPTICAL VIEWS ON ANNUAL UNGA EXERCISE AND MAY PUSH FOR CHANGES IN APPROACH TO UNGA. KIM ALSO SAID INCIDENTALLY HE COULD HAVE KEPT HIS JOB, BUT THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO SERVE AS "VICE MINISTER" TO CHOE. APPOINTMENT OF NEW FOREIGN MINISTER AND NEED TO FILL JOBS FOR OUSTED YUCHONGHOE ASSEMBLYMEN IN MARCH AUGUR FOR NUMEROUS TOP LEVEL MOFA AND AMBASSADORIAL CHANGES IN NEXT MONTHS. (KIM TONG-CHO SAYS HE HIMSELF ALREADY HAD PLANS FOR THIS).

5. ALTHOUGH VICE MINISTERIAL AND OTHER LOWER LEVEL CHANGES ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME AS MINISTERS FORM THEIR OWN STAFFS, OUR SOURCES EXPECT NO MORE HIGH LEVEL CHANGES UNTIL RE-APPOINTMENT OF YUCHONGHOE AND ASSEMBLY OFFICES IN MARCH. FOR NOW, PRESIDENT PARK IS REMAINING SILENT AS TO POSSIBLE ASSEMBLY APPOINTMENTS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION THAT SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON MAY BE REPLACED AND THAT FORMER CHIEF OF PRESIDENTIAL PROTECTIVE FORCE APK CHONG-KYU WILL BE APPOINTED TO YUCHONGHOE. THE GREATEST INTEREST, HOWEVER, IS IN EVENTUAL FATE OF KIM CHONG-PIL.

6. OUR SOURCES ARE IN AGREEMENT THAT KIM WILL NOT BE OUT OF PICTURE FOR LONG. IT IS RUMORED THAT HE WILL TAKE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL POST SUCH AS ASSEMBLY SPEAKERSHIP, CHAIRMAN DRP
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OR YUCHONGHOE. (IF HE RETURNS TO DRP KIM WILL HAVE TO GIVE UP HIS YUCHONGHOE ASSEMBLY SEAT). PRESS INTERPRETS KIM'S DECEMBER 23 VISITS TO OPPOSITION LEADER KIM YONG-SAM AND YUCHONGHOE CHAIRMAN PAK TU-CHIN AS SIGN OF IMPORTANT CONTINUING POLITICAL ROLE.

7. IN ANY EVENT WHATEVER FURTHER PERSONNEL CHANGES ARE IN THE OFFING WE WOULD EXPECT THEM TO REFLECT THE OVERALL DECISION APPARENTLY MADE BY THE PRESIDENT THAT THE INTRODUCTORY POLITICAL PHASE WHEREIN THE INSTRUMENTS OF YUSHIN WERE ESTABLISHED IS LARGELY CONCLUDED. THE CENTERS OF OPPOSITION IN THE UNIVERSITIES, THE RELIGIOUS SECTOR, THE PRESS, AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAVE ALL BEEN MADE AWARE IN THE PAST NINE MONTHS WHAT THE TOLERANCE LIMITS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY ARE AND DURING THE PAST HALF YEAR HAVE ACCEPTED THEM. APPARENTLY THE TIME NOW

CALLS FOR MEN WHO IN THE PRESIDENT'S VIEW FULLY UNDERSTAND,
HAVE EFFECTIVELY OPERATED, AND CAN FINE TUNE THE ESTABLISHED
INSTRUMENTS OF POLITICAL CONTROL. FORTHCOMING MONTHS AND
PARTICULARLY THE EARLY SPRING MONTHS SHOULD TEST THE VALIDITY
OF THE ESTABLISHED INSTRUMENTS AND THE ABILITY OF THE MEN
THE PRESIDENT HAS CHOSEN TO ADMINISTER THEM.
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